Extension of retirement age for regimental commissioned officers

*191. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Regimental Commissioned Officers have not been given the benefit of extension of their retirement age, whereas regular officers have been given this benefit;

(b) if so, whether this denial of extension in retirement age at par with regular officers, would affect their moral adversely, which may dampen their spirit, so necessary for an Army Officer, defending the country;

(c) how the Government proposes to undo the wrong being done in the case of Regimental Commissioned Officer; and

(d) what is the time-frame which this discrepancy would be removed?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) The retirement age of Regimental Commissioned Officers (RCOs) was enhanced by 2 years as in case of other regular service officers, w.e.f. 30th May, 1998. The retirement age of RCOs was enhanced from 50 years or 10 years of service to 52 years or 12 years of service, whichever is earlier.

A proposal to further enhance the retirement age of RCOs to 54 years of age or 14 years of service, whichever is earlier, has been referred to the VI Central Pay Commission so that the RCOs become eligible for time based promotion to the rank of Lt. Col. after 13 years of reckonable service as recommended by the AV Singh Committee.

Schemes for welfare of weavers

†*192. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of schemes being executed by Government at present for the welfare of the weavers;

(b) whether any scheme, namely Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana (DDHPY), was operating at one point of time;

(c) if so, since when and duration thereof, together with the outcome of the scheme; and

(d) whether this scheme has been discontinued now?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINGH VAGHELA): (a) During the 11th plan, the Government of India is implementing following schemes for welfare of handloom weavers:

(1) HANDLOOM WEAVERS COMPREHENSIVE WELFARE SCHEME

(i) Health Insurance Scheme

The scheme covers not only the weaver but his wife and two children also. It covers all pre-existing diseases as well as new diseases. The annual limit per family is Rs. 15000/- out of which Rs. 7500/- is for OPD. Besides handloom weavers, ancillary Handlooms workers also eligible to be covered under the scheme.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(ii) Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana

This scheme provides insurance cover to handloom weavers in case of natural and accidental death as also disability. The benefits range from Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 1.5 lakh.

(2) INTEGRATED HANDLOOMS DEVELOPMENT SCHEME is under consideration of the government. The scheme is formed by subsuming some of the components of Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana, Integrated Handloom Training Project, Workshed-cum-Housing Scheme and Integrated Handloom Cluster Development Scheme. The scheme proposes to develop clusters of handloom weavers in group approach. It will also provide assistance for basic inputs, marketing incentive and strengthening of handloom organizations.

(3) MARKETING & EXPORT SCHEME

The Marketing & Export Promotion Scheme has two components (i) Marketing Promotion and (ii) Handloom Export Promotion.

(i) The Marketing Promotion covers organization of Exhibitions, Events and Craft Melas, Setting up of Urban Haats, Setting up of Marketing Complexes, Publicity & Awareness. Geographical Indication Act, Handloom Marketing Complex, Janpath, New Delhi and Handloom Mark.

(ii) The objective of the Handloom Export Promotion is to assist the handloom cooperative societies & corporations through publicity related activities and participation in International Exhibitions. Buyer-Seller Meets etc.

(4) MILL GATE PRICE SCHEME

The objective of the Mill Gate Scheme is to provide all types of yarn to the handloom weavers' organizations at the Mill Gate Price.

(5) DIVERSIFIED HANDLOOM DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Scheme has been formulated with the objective of providing skill upgradation of the handloom weavers through training, workshops and exhibitions, design development documentation of traditional designs and providing linkage and meeting the marketing requirements. It has also been decide to conduct the third all India Handloom Census and issue Identity Cards to the handloom weavers.

(b) and (c) The Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana (DDHPY) was introduced in the year 2000-01. From the inception of the scheme and upto 31.03.2007, financial assistance of Rs. 466.21 crore was released in form of grant to benefit commulatively about 30,47,252 weavers.

(d) Components of the Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana have been subsumed into the new Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme proposed to be implemented during XIth Plan.

Dilution of MPEDA's priorities

*193. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) is giving more importance to tuna fisheries and less to exports;

(b) whether it is a fact that MPEDA held some meeting in Visakhapatnam recently;